1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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either for oneself or for one's family. One young labourer from the country gave his father 5*s.* out of his weekly wages of 7*s.* to put by for his bride-price; another kept 2*s.* to 3*s.* a month for himself, and gave the rest to his father. Many Bida labourers, on the other hand, used the whole money for themselves; some explained that they had become labourers because there was no money in their old profession, others because they wanted to be independent and because their fathers or elder brothers could not give them as much money as they liked to have.

To summarize: as one would expect paid labour, especially temporary labour, does not represent a 'real' profession in the sense of an occupation involving special training and selection of workers. It is essentially a stopgap occupation chosen to supplement or replace a failing normal source of income. Owing to the specific composition of Nupe society the new profession is being adopted by certain social groups and strata more than by others. Yet in some respects paid industrial labour must be regarded almost as a modern continuation of forms of occupations which, in the traditional society, bore the same supplementary and stopgap character. As such it appeals strongly to the individual craftsman, to Mallams, and *bara*, who depend for their livelihood on similar forms of unskilled and partly temporary work. It differs from these other occupations, however, in that it is carried out on the road and in the workshop yard instead of in the home, and that it represents heavy manual labour, and not light work which it is easy to combine with a dignified social status. The labourers unlike the individual craftsmen, can no longer pretend that they belong to the leisured class. If they receive better and more regular pay, they also lose caste. This explains why of the many hundreds of men who, once members of the privileged classes, are to-day men 'without occupation',[1] gaining a precarious livelihood from occasional work, only those coming from the lowest grade of the 'upper classes' have chosen the profession of labourers.

In the case of the peasants we can no longer speak of any inherent congruity between their work and the new temporary occupation. To them, especially to the peasants who do not practise a handicraft beside agriculture, paid labour in addition to farm-work, a form of labour, moreover, which keeps them for months from their homes, must appear as something quite new and unprecedented. If to-day paid labour is gradually attracting the peasant class as well, twenty or thirty years ago the (very prosperous) Nupe peasants had to be coaxed by all available means to undertake temporary paid labour, for example, in railway construction. The more 'sophisticated' Hausa and Yoruba were already then flocking in large numbers to work of this kind. Missionaries who knew Nupe country at that time told me that it was often impossible in the peasant districts to obtain even porters to carry loads; the promise of money did not attract them sufficiently to make them leave their homes even temporarily, to upset their whole routine of work or forgo their well-earned leisure. In certain backward and prosperous districts this

[1] An unofficial occupational census of Bida lists 1,130 men under the class 'no occupation'. They belong without exception to the titled leisured classes of the Emirate.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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426 735 a judge—the people may have recourse to pawning one family member to procure money for another. Younger sons would be pawned to find the bride-price for the eldest son, whose marriage must be made possible. Or a father would pawn himself to provide money for his son, perhaps to save him from prison or a death sentence. Girls, too, are pawned, though as a rule for a smaller amount of money than boys or men. I have recorded an interesting case of 'multiple' pawning: a man of about 30 had pawned himself in order to be able to marry, but could not find the money to ransom himself. He continued to live in bondage till his son from this marriage was twelve years old, and thus fit to be pawned in turn. The boy took the place of his father as pawn in the same house, and the older man was released. I do not know when, or if, the boy was in turn released.

426 735 567 558 It is interesting to compare pawning with slavery. The first difference is that pawning is, at least in theory, regarded as a purely temporary arrangement. The father or elder brother of a pawn would always expect to release their relative from bondage in from five to ten years. The pawn works for his master, in his house or on his land, like all other household members, slaves, or junior family members. But unlike slaves, pawns are servants in the narrow sense of the word: they cannot expect friendly help from their master; they would not, for example, be married at the expense of their master—if they cannot afford the bride-price they must remain unmarried. On the other hand, the master may not beat or kill the pawn, as he may a slave: this would constitute a normal case of assault or homicide, actionable before the court. A pawn who is unwilling or unable to work satisfactorily, can, however, be exchanged for another more promising member of his family. Pawns and their whole family are held in general contempt. There is no shame in having become a slave—this is 'luck of war'; but pawns and their families are tainted with a disgrace not easily forgotten. In pawning poverty, itself a shameful state in the eyes of the Nupe, reaches its lowest ebb. Even house slaves look down upon pawns, and order them about as their inferiors.

426 735 567 554 Another difference between pawning and slavery is the amount of money involved. While the prices for slaves are firmly fixed, the loan for which the pawn is taken as security varies greatly, between £3 and £10. The work of the pawn during the time of bondage represents the 'interest' on the loan. The profit motive is expressed most clearly in the practice that girl pawns were accepted only for smaller amounts. For with girls one had to reckon with a shorter period of 'amortization' as they might get married early and be redeemed by the bride-price. However, the profit motive is not sufficient to explain the institution of pawning. [517] A wealthy man could not, according to the Nupe code of morality, refuse a loan of this kind to a man who was badly in need of the money. Which means that the creditor might have to agree even to less tempting and profitable offers. Frequently he had to accept a young boy who, hardly yet an efficient labourer, would live in his house and learn farm-work or a craft only to be taken away again just as he had become a useful member of the household. For £5 one could buy outright a grown-up, well-

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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CHAPTER XXI

ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

ECONOMIC MOBILITY

565 556 558 THE lack of tangible data makes it impossible to formulate any theory about the extent to which economic mobility, i.e. movement between the strata, was a reality in pre-European days. We can only make a few statements based on social and historical facts the economic significance of which we can, with some certainty, assess. Economic betterment in every society depends on the possibility of increasing one's hold over resources and means of production. The Fulani conquest, and the exploitation of land which followed it, restricted, for one part of Nupe at least, mobility with regard to the main resource, land. The restriction could, however, be circumvented by means of political allegiance, i.e. by becoming the client of an influential landowner. There is also evidence that certain peasants and craftsmen have owned slaves and taken pawns, thus acquiring interest-bearing capital, and so rising above the average level of a peasant's or artisan's livelihood. In the ruling classes and among their dependants careers involving increased economic opportunities were the normal thing, whether they were expressed in a share in booty and slave-trade or in rewards to warriors and political followers 'for services rendered'. The reverse process, loss of economic opportunities, and in the extreme case the loss of all possessions, was no less marked. In the life of the peasant, such changes occurred in the course of wars and raids involving the destruction of homesteads, farms, and stores. The peasants in Nupe kingdom proper, though safe from slave-raids, were still exposed to similar attacks: punitive expeditions which, directed against a rebellious feudal lord, were fought on their land, or the visitation of armies which marched through and foraged from their farms. In the ruling group economic downfall could mean only one thing: political disgrace, often accompanied by confiscation of their property.

565 To-day the risks of war and raids have disappeared, together with the exploitation and one-sided source of income which they represented. Thus the new rule has to some extent levelled down the old economic inequalities. Clearly this levelling-down cannot have been equally welcome to every section of the population. Let me quote here the very frank and, in fact, typical statement of one of my most honest informants, an influential village elder of Mokwa. He admitted the great benefits of the present rule, thanks to which the *tdlaka*, the poor man, enjoys safety from wars, raids, and political abuses. But then he added (rather heatedly in fact): 'But you have turned us all into *tdlaka*.' This view, coming as it does not from a member of the ruling class but from a typical Nupe peasant, makes it necessary to review more closely the economic effects of the new order.[1] All our data tend to show that, although trade

[1] It incidentally supplies further evidence of the fact that a rise to superior economic position also occurred in the peasant classes.

SLAVERY

567 Slaves attached to the royal house and the nobility could rise to positions of wealth and influence, and some of the former titled court slaves have in recent times become Native Authority officials. Slaves had a certain measure of social and economic independence; though female slaves had no income and their earnings belonged to their master, they might become the concubines of a free man and be given their freedom. Any children born would in any case be free. Male slaves could seek to purchase their independence.

Slaves were obtained both by capture in war and by purchase in the Bida market. Owners had the power of life and death over slaves, though in practice they rarely maltreated them. Indeed, when slavery was abolished, many former slaves elected to remain as unpaid servants with their former masters. Children born to a man's slaves were called *mangi* (" children of the house ") and could not be sold, maltreated, or killed. They were brought up as members of the household but were not entitled to a share in the master's inheritance. A master would, however, provide the marriage payment for a marriage arranged by him for one of his slaves with another slave.[53]

PAWNING

426 The practice of pawning human pledges grew to enormous proportions before 555 its final suppression in 1933–34. Under the pressure of unexpected or imperative demands, one person in a family, preferably a male, would be pawned for 5–10 years. Pawning was regarded as a disgrace and the pawns were looked down on by their masters and even by the household slaves.[54]

POSITION OF WOMEN

562 Women's activities, other than household tasks, include spinning, weaving, cooking cakes for sale in the market, and hairdressing (a lucrative profession). Women are also doctors and traders, though those whose professional duties keep them away from home for long periods are commonly regarded as " loose " women. They collect the produce of all trees except palm-oil and kola; they cultivate and sell groundnuts and root crops and help to trade some of the men's crops.

A woman's earnings as a trader cannot be touched by her husband, but remain her property until her death, when he inherits them. Among commoners a woman is often better-off than her husband and may lend him money for taxes and the purchase of tools, and even provide for marriages and funerals. The inter-sex hostility, which has been accentuated by the economic independence and consequent sexual freedom of women, also shows itself in the Nupe conception of witchcraft, where a witch is thought to do mystically what a woman actually does in everyday life.[55]

562 The most important women's titles are those of *nimuvoye*, of the royal house of 565 Masaba, and *sagi*, of the royal houses of Umaru and Usman Zaki alternatively. Quarrels between women are brought before women holding these titles and the women of Bida town and the villages bring them gifts. *Sagi* is also the title of the " head of the women " in every Nupe village. The chief woman commoner in Bida has the title of *sonya*; she organizes all large-scale women's work and is entrusted with the supervision of the market. She is now an official of the Native Administration, receiving a small salary. The status of a woman by descent is not 554 reduced on marriage, since Nupe class sentiments cannot admit a lowering of the status of anyone high-born.[56]

[53] Nadel, 1942, pp. 103–8, 157.
[54] Ibid., pp. 311–13.
[55] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 172–81.
[56] Nadel, 1942, pp. 331–4, 147–56; Temple, 1919, p. 326.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

585 and after this festivities begin, ending on the ninth day with the segregation of the bride. The last ceremony, on the 12th day, consists of a ritual meal of a cock and hen by the bride and bridegroom and their close relatives, after which the marriage may be consummated.[13]

Divorce

586 According to Temple[13] a woman may divorce her husband if he has been convicted of crime, if he fails to maintain her, or deserts her for three years. A man may divorce his wife for adultery but seldom does so, since, as Nadel points out, the economic dependence of many husbands on their wives discourages them from seeking a divorce on these grounds. They also feel that it involves a loss of prestige to appear in the rôle of a wronged husband. Adultery is, indeed, widespread among women of every status, particularly in Bida.[14]

Burial

764 According to the traditional ceremonial, burial (*mba*) takes place as soon as possible after death and at any time of day when there is enough light to see by. The grave-diggers (*goro*), who also prepare the body for burial, are sent for immediately death has taken place. The age and kinship position of the deceased determines the place of burial, old men and women, and family heads, being buried under the floor of their sleeping-huts, with a sacrifice performed (by the *goro*) over the grave. Others are buried without ceremony in the space between the huts, by the compound wall, or in a disused, roofless hut. People dying of smallpox are buried in the normal way, except that the body is wrapped in old rags instead of a new cloth. Lepers are buried in the bush. The grave is oblong and shallow, only about 2 ft. below the ground, with a roof of wooden beams covered by a white grass mat, to keep the earth off the corpse. The body is placed on a similar mat, lying on its side, Moslems facing east. A grave is not marked in any way, the earth being carefully levelled, indeed, if burial has been in a sleeping-hut, the hut continues to be used.

765 At the death of chiefs or priests any particular ritual " owned " by them is performed. The full funeral ceremonies consist of three rituals, carried out after 8, 40, and 120 days, bearing the names of these time intervals. The full series is performed only for married men; old men, without surviving widows, do not have the last ritual. In general, children, unmarried young men, and women have only the " eight days."

Mourning must be kept up for eight days, during which relatives of the deceased must not wash, dress their hair, or change their clothes, but men observe this rule for only four days so that they may make preparations for the " eight days " feast. Widows observe mourning until four months after the " eight days " and may not think of re-marriage until then.

764 184 In Moslem funerals, the *goro* grave-diggers are replaced by mallams, who speak or read prayers in the presence of the men of the house, both before the body is buried and again before the grave is finally closed. The mallams are offered food and money, in payment for their services and as a " pious offering " to be distributed among the other mallams of the town. The subsequent ceremonials have also been made occasions for alms-giving.[15]

[13] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 19–21.
[14] Temple, 1919, pp. 321–2.
[14] Nadel, 1942, pp. 152–3.
[15] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 121–30.